



You, your pet and us

Draft Animal Management Plan

Managing Cats



Being a responsible cat owner

Managing Cats



Because cats are intelligent, resourceful and hardy, it is easy to think that they do not need as much care and attention as other pets. But cats need love, attention, companionship, feeding and a suitable space to live and play in.

You need to be aware of three important areas to be a responsible cat owner.

1. Be aware of your responsibilities

Ensure your cat has adequate food, shelter and water at all times.

Meet the ongoing costs in caring for your cat such as vaccinations, maintenance of health and welfare, desexing, microchipping and registration.

Be aware of all relevant By-Laws (and penalties that apply to offences).

2. Create a suitable home environment before bringing your cat home

Make sure you have thought about which parts of your home your cat can access, where it will eat, sleep and toilet, and check that any outside areas they can access are safe and appropriately fenced or contained.

3. Keep your cat safely contained

Suburban environments pose too many risks to allow cats complete freedom. If you meet all their needs, de-sexed cats are happy to live inside your home or in a suitable enclosed area. Research shows the average life span of a cat kept inside is 12 years. The life expectancy of a cat allowed to roam at will is generally less.

It is natural for a cat to hunt, even those that are well fed and cared for. By keeping your cat inside or in a suitable enclosed area, you are helping reduce the number of times they might attack or threaten our native wildlife.

Keeping your cat inside will ensure that it does not mix with the feral cat population, reducing potential health issues for your cat. It will also help stop the feral cat population from growing.

Key issues for owners to be aware of

For the first time, cat owners will have legal responsibilities under the proposed Animal Management By-Laws. These specifically address cat registration and cats being at large.

These issues, and the associated By-Laws, are addressed in detail in this section.

Please remember that this document is intended to be a guide only. Its application is subject to relevant legislation and Council policy and it will from time to time be amended accordingly.



Objective

To provide animal management services that meet the needs of the community and encourage responsible pet ownership.

Registration and microchipping

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All cats over three (3) months of age which have been in Darwin for one month must be registered.

There are many benefits of cat registration.

- It is your proof of ownership.
- Council can return lost pets to their owners quickly.
- You can be contacted easily if your pet is involved in an accident/ incident and requires veterinary treatment.
- You have access to useful information, as owners receive an information package outlining their responsibilities when they register their pet.
- Fees provide a source of funds for Council's education and enforcement programs.

Conditions of registration

When you register your cat for the first time, you will receive an information package that outlines registration conditions and your responsibilities as a cat owner in Darwin.

To register your cat you must agree:

- to have your cat microchipped
- to adequately contain your cat at all times, and
- to apply for a licence if you intend to keep more than three cats (this will not apply for the first year that the By-Laws are in operation).

Microchipping

Microchips allow Regulatory Officers, vets and RSPCA staff to quickly identify your cat by scanning them with a microchip reader. The microchip gives your cat a unique number, which can be matched on databases that store information about your cat and your contact details. This helps with the speedy return of cats that are lost, at large or injured.

Licence requirements

Under the By-Laws, owners can keep three registered cats on one property.

If you want to keep more than three cats on your property, you will need to apply for a licence from Council. Each application attracts a fee. When Council assesses the application, they will search for any previous complaints against you (the owner), consult with neighbours and check that the premises are suitable and have a suitably contained area.

When licences are granted, they may be approved with specific conditions.

Arrangements for implementing the new By-Laws

As this is the first time Council's By-Laws address cat registration, microchipping and licensing the following arrangements have been put in place to ensure a fair and smooth process for cat owners.

All cats will need to be registered during July 2008 when the By-Laws take effect.

A cat that is over six years of age at 1 July 2008 will not need to be microchipped to be registered.

If, on 1 July 2008, you have more than three cats residing on your property, Council will accept registrations for all of them. However, in the long term, you will not be able to keep more than three cats on your property without having to apply for a licence.

Enforcement

Council employs a Regulatory Officer whose job is to enforce registration requirements. If your cat is not registered and/or microchipped or you do not have a licence if required, you will be fined up to \$110 in accordance with the By-Laws. (63A Failure to comply with condition of registration)



Objective

A combination of education, prevention, awareness programs and enforcement is required to achieve Council's objectives.

Cats at large

🐾 Managing Cats



Cats are usually well loved members of a family. However, even a pet cat that is well fed and looked after, may still roam and hunt.

Cats that roam outside their yards usually have a shorter life span – they often become lost, injured, killed or are stolen while roaming unattended in the street. Their behaviour while roaming can also be a nuisance to other people.

Sometimes cats are abandoned by their owners and are left to become strays and join the feral cat population. Feral cats do not depend on people at all for their food and shelter. They roam, scavenging for food and hunting our native wildlife.

Darwin currently has a large feral cat population which poses many issues for cat owners, community members and Council.

When is a cat at large?

According to the By-Laws, a cat is at large if it is:

- not properly contained in the owners' property / yard;
- not under effective control by the owner; or
- any part of its body is protruding from a vehicle.

Owners are required to have their cats on a lead or enclosed in a suitable container when they are not being contained on the owner's property.

Trapping cats at large

When a complaint is received about a cat being at large, Council will follow an established process to try to resolve the matter to everyone's satisfaction.

If the owner of the cat involved in the complaint cannot be identified, or they will not cooperate, Regulatory Officers will attempt to trap the cat. To do this, a cat trap is placed in the area where the cat is suspected to be. Neighbours and owners of registered cats in the surrounding area will be informed about the trap via a letter box drop.

During the 12 weeks following the letterbox drop, Council will periodically place a cat trap in a sheltered location. Regulatory Officers will check the trap at least daily for captured cats.

If a captured cat can be identified via a microchip or other means, the owner of the animal will be notified and fined.

Captured cats that cannot be identified will be taken to the pound and managed according to Council's pound procedures, which may include the cat being destroyed after a certain period of impoundment.



Objective

Assess and review current educational strategies to ensure that information and materials are up to date and are reaching the required audience.

Enforcement

Owners of cats found at large will be fined up to \$110 in accordance with the By-Laws. (67(1))

Complaints management process

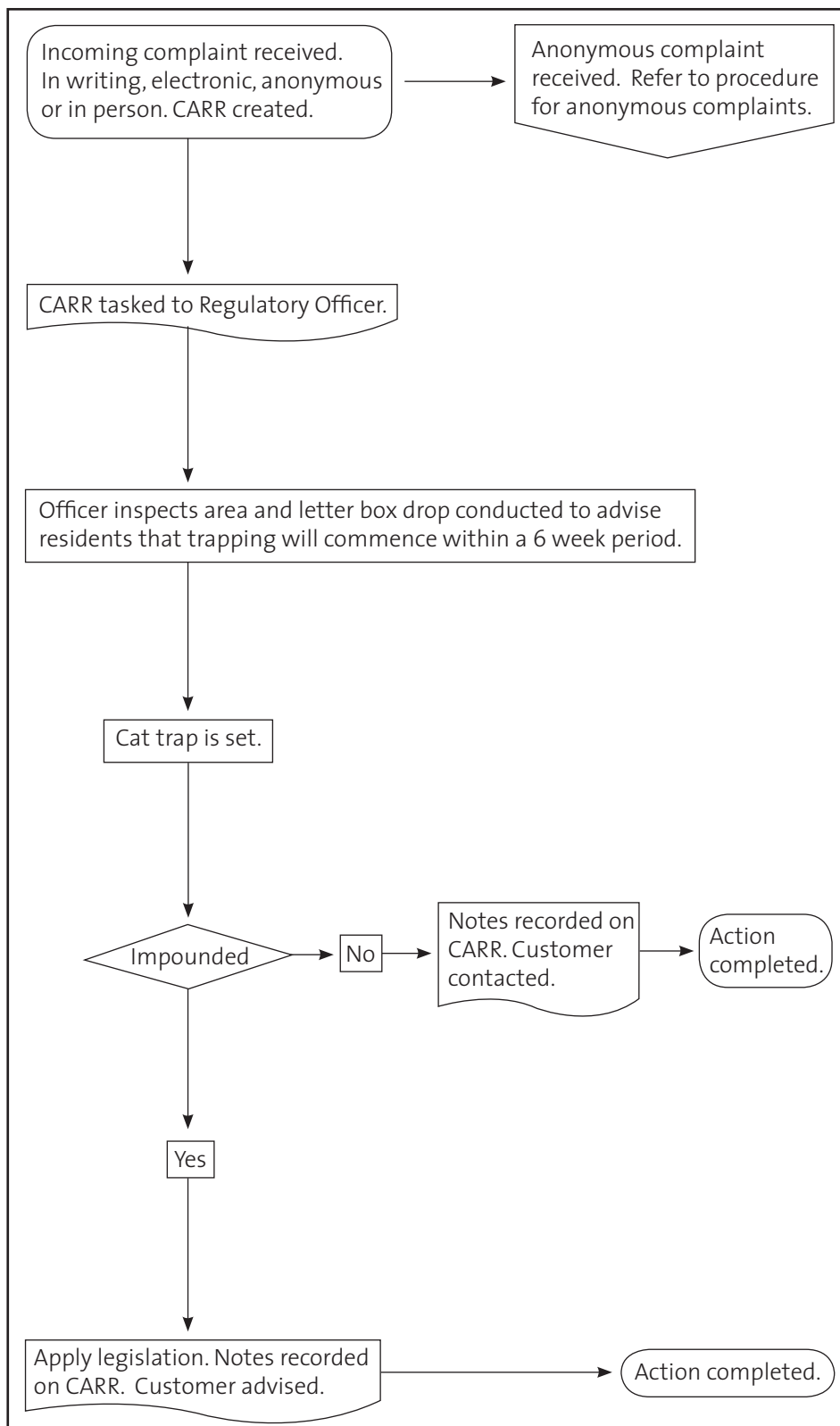
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Council has developed a process to manage complaints received about cats. This process is outlined in the flow chart below.

If you make a complaint, or a complaint is made about your cat, Council will ensure you are informed throughout the resolution process.

If you require more information please contact Darwin City Council (08) 8930 0606.





Enquiries 08 8930 0606

www.darwin.nt.gov.au